

BEING A LEADER: Excerpt from *Leading from Within*

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There are four characteristics of effective leaders which I consider foundational. They are not traits which you are either born with or not. Neither are they attributes that you might acquire by learning more about them. I believe these essential leader characteristics are CHOICES that we make. Exemplary leaders are passionate, authentic, credible, and ethical.

Passion

Purpose and passion go hand in hand. To be an effective leader, you must first care. When you care deeply, you have a passion that is more than simply the spark that gets you started, it is the fire inside that will sustain you. It is a commitment so compelling that your whole self — body, mind, and spirit — are engaged. Passion is not the same as a single-minded determination to get what you want or to create the changes you think should be made. Rather, passion for a higher purpose is characterized by an openness to possibilities and the innate belief that people want to work together to create the best future imaginable. Passion plus possibilities gives you courage!

Authenticity

To be authentic is to be genuine. From my perspective, this means being who you are, all the time. To be authentic frees us to be everything we were meant to be! We admit our shortcomings to ourselves, recognize our strengths, and live who we are. When someone feels the need to behave in a particular way while at work and not be the person they know themselves to be at home or with friends, something has to give. The result is either an implosion or an explosion of the self. I believe that much of the disconnectedness we sometimes feel grows out of a need for authenticity. We long for genuine, trustworthy interaction where we live and work, and we experience fulfillment when our relationships with others are honest, grounded in the truth of who we are.

Credibility

If you are to have credibility, you must do what you say you will do. Your reputation as a credible person develops as a direct result of the trust others have in you to follow through, acting on what you have committed yourself to do. From my perspective, credibility begins with being authentic and is manifested in the actions you promise AND deliver. It is being accountable for what you say you will do. Whereas authenticity is grounded in personal integrity, credibility is the choice you make for interpersonal integrity.

Ethics

Ethical leaders have at the center of their belief system a high regard for human worth and dignity. They make decisions and take action in accord with these deeply held values and beliefs. Service to others and a commitment to the greater good for more people is the essence of what it means to be ethical. Being ethical is a choice you make when

passion, authenticity, and credibility are aligned with a belief system which is grounded in service to the global community.

Being a Leader

Being a leader means recognizing passion, authenticity, integrity, and ethics as the cornerstones of effective leadership upon which we lay the foundation to bring about change. And these are personal choices, not simply what we come to know by studying about leaders and leadership. Being a leader means knowing who you are at the deepest level.

(Some excerpts from Nancy Huber's book [Leading from Within](#), published by Krieger in 1998.)